

The trek north with the George Burgess' outfit

Times were tough in southern Alberta. It froze hard in July 1932 wiping out all the crops besides that the grass hoppers were unbelievable. They literally ate what was left of the crops, also whole quarter sections were cleaned right off. They ate holes in the canvas tents and clothes on the line. If this wasn't enough to discourage people there was the heavy taxes that came when the irrigation system was first introduced. Every farmer whether he had irrigation on his land or not was charged two dollars an acre. With drought, frost, grasshoppers now the increase of the taxes was enough to get some of the people thinking about leaving Southern Alberta and heading north. The reason that Cold Lake area was chosen, George's half brother, John, had a trap line and was living in the area and had written George telling him to come north as there were great opportunities. There were much soul searching, prayer and talking to others including church leaders - couple of whom were J.Y. Card and a Brother Sloan They advised us that it was a very good move and an excellent opportunity to spread the church. Also there were enough of them going that if they remained strong in the church they would eventually see the results of their labors.

George sold everything so he could pay up the \$800 back taxes and made preparations to leave. There were others planning to leave as a group - Ervin and Eliza Loose and family, Vernon Loose who drove one of Ervins wagons. Lester and Delva Lybbert and family, Lloyd and Luella Lybbert and family, Alvin Nelson (Gertrude went in the spring), George's parents Horace and Julia, George's sister Leah and brother Lloyd, besides George's family. George and Annie made their own wagon. The date set to leave was 7th September which would give everyone time to get things ready, etc. and they would gather at an open about 3 miles north of Glenwood. They were also taking their cattle and horses. That evening they held a meeting to decide just how far they would travel each day, and discussed other matters. It was decided that George would be the leader of the party and be the spokesman and his outfit would be in the lead. They didn't go far that first day because there were a few bugs to iron out and get things organized.

When breakfast was over the riders would start out with the cattle and horses, the rest of the outfit would prepare to leave and by noon they would catch up with the riders. They would stop for lunch and then travel as far as the cattle would travel then made camp.

For the most part the trip went well. A couple of incidents that happened. One day as they were travelling, a farmer came out and wanted to buy one of George's cows. He said he had a young baby and was willing to pay twice the price of the cow so he could have milk for the baby. The cow that he wanted was one that Annie's father had given them and she was an exceptionally good cow. George told him that he would not sell her. That afternoon the cows drank some alkali water, a number of them got sick but George's special cow was the only one that died. Another incident when some of the horses strayed from camp and one of them got into a mud hole and could not get out. It was not far from a farm yard so some one went and asked the farmer, who was going into the field with his horses and outfit, would he come to pull the horse out. He flatly refused. Although he had several men and five 6 horse outfits going out into the field. So the men had to go back to the camp unhitch a team and go to pull the horse out. These two incidents were exception as most of the farmers were more than willing to help where they could. One lady gave Barton a pup. They had lots of wheel trouble.

When they got to Gleichen they received word from their MLA George Stringham at Glenwood that he had made arrangement with the C.N.R. to load our cattle and outfits on the train at Rose Bud and they would be shipped to Edmonton. They were very pleased with that news. When they drove the livestock through Gleichen they had a lot of trouble keeping them off the lawns. It took them 4 days to go to Rose Bud where they waited about 8 days for the train to come. This was the first place one could get on the C.N.R. The C.P.R. was not helping people to move. While they waited the women took the laundry to the river to wash in the cold water, and did other necessary chores, the men did the necessary repairs to wagons, harnesses, etc. It wasn't easy to keep the young children occupied during this long wait. A couple of the boys set some grass on fire which caused some excitement. In the evenings bonfires were built and the group would gather around for sing song, etc. For something to do several of the older boys would jump over the fire. One of Lloyd Lybbert's boys tried it but wasn't so lucky and fell into the fire and was badly burned. The train finally came and they loaded every thing onto the cars, they took the wheels off the wagons, the livestock went into the cattle cars. The women and children were taken on a passenger train to Edmonton. The livestock was taken off at Edmonton watered and then reloaded. The train from Edmonton to Bonnyville was a mixed train so everyone was on the same train. They spent two days in Bonnyville getting things ready so they could carry on to Beaver Crossing arriving there on the 12th of October. George said they had used the last of their flour and most of their food when they cooked their last meal just before crossing the Beaver River and all the money he had was 45 cents in his pocket. There was supposed to be a job for George but there wasn't any and Annie was ready to turn around and go back the next morning as she was used to the prairie. The bush country didn't look good to her, with no home, no food and no money. But they stuck it out. It was not easy.